



Ben, Kristen and David (Mandvi, Herbers and Colter, from left) look for answers

IT'S GOOD TO BE BAD

Evil, the hit CBS thriller about the origins of wicked behavior, closes out its sinfully fun first season with its freakiest story yet **BY ILEANE RUDOLPH**

SPEAK OF THE DEVIL!

The smart, scary and witty philosophical thriller *Evil*, already renewed for Season 2, has spun stories about such things as demonic possession and a nasty mythological being called an incubus. Now, as the acclaimed first season comes to a close, creators Robert and Michelle King raise the hellish stakes by introducing a character “who may or may not be Satan,” hints Michelle.

The emergence of this being has to do with the Vatican’s long-secret codex, a 280-page manuscript that contains several prophecies—one involving 60 demons and foreseeing the world’s destruction. Priest-in-training David Acosta (Mike Colter), forensic psychologist Kristen Bouchard (Katja Herbers) and technical expert Ben Shakir (Aasif Mandvi) have been looking into symbols and clues in the document as part of their work for the Catholic Church. (The trio investigate hard-to-explain mysteries and whether any warrant an exorcism or designation as a miracle.) “The closer you get to the design of the plan, the closer you get to the designer, who in this case is satanic,” Robert reveals. (Viewers first get a glimpse of the malevolent creature in the episode airing January 16.)

And where evil lurks, Leland Townsend (Michael Emerson), also a forensic psychologist, can’t be far behind. The bespectacled creep makes it his mission to instigate folks to do awful things, like shoot up a prayer group. Naturally, he’s “right smack in the middle” of the drama, Michelle says. Adds Robert, “You get the sense that Leland is the satanic character’s first lieutenant.”

But unlike David, a true believer in malevolent forces, skeptic Kristen insists any so-called supernatural event has a scientific explanation, and she certainly isn’t buying talk of an otherworldly hierarchy. “Kristen doesn’t believe in demons. She believes Leland is a psychopath,” Herbers notes. “To her, he seems to be part of a ring of 60 crazy people trying to do evil things.”

Whatever Leland is, he’s successfully wormed his way into the life of Kristen’s carefree mother, Sheryl (Christine Lahti). The couple’s sex was so passionate in one encounter that the bed appeared to burst into flames! And since a pregnancy also takes center stage in the last of the season’s 13 episodes, could it be

(gasp!) grandma Sheryl who’s with child? The tight-lipped Kings aren’t spilling, but Robert does say of the events that transpire, “we don’t get freakier than that.”

Evil

SEASON FINALE

Thursday, Jan. 30, 10/9c, CBS